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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001794

SIPDIS

CORRECTED COPY - TEXTUAL CHANGE IN PARAGRAPH 1

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: AREAS AROUND SAKÉ UNDER CONTROL OF MONUC, FARDC

REF: KINSHASA 1787

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Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Areas around the North Kivu town of Sake were retaken late November 27 by joint forces of the Congolese military (FARDC) and MONUC peacekeepers. Locations on the outskirts of Sake had briefly fallen under control of non-integrated FARDC troops loyal to dissident General Laurent Nkunda after fighting in the region November 25-27. End summary.

¶2. (U) Elements of the non-integrated pro-Nkunda FARDC 81st and 83rd Brigades gained control of the hills around the town of Sake, 15 miles northwest of the North Kivu capital of Goma, by November 27 after two days of fighting with the FARDC's 11th and 14th Integrated Brigades (reftel). According to MONUC military reports, the renegade elements regrouped the night of November 26 and began moving the morning of November 27 on 11th Integrated Brigade (IB) positions in Kasingazi, three miles east of Sake. MONUC Indian peacekeepers responded by launching helicopter gunships and firing several dozen rockets to halt the advance. The MONUC attack halted the movement of the dissident forces, but 11th IB soldiers in Kasingazi reportedly ran out of ammunition and subsequently abandoned their positions and withdrew towards Goma.

¶3. (SBU) Subsequent to this advance, another group of soldiers from the 81st and 83rd Brigades moved towards Sake from positions in the surrounding hills. MONUC peacekeepers in the town, supported by MONUC attack helicopters, successfully repelled this attack as well. MONUC military reports indicated the renegade troops from the 81st and 83rd began vacating some of their positions around Sake around noon November 27. Elements of the 11th and 14th IBs subsequently re-entered Sake and took up their previously-abandoned posts with additional MONUC fire support.

¶4. (SBU) By 1900 local time November 27, MONUC reported all the hills around Sake were re-occupied by members of the 11th and 14th IBs with MONUC support. An additional battalion from the 10th Military Region in South Kivu was flown to Sake to reinforce FARDC positions. A company of MONUC South African peacekeepers and the Guatemalan special forces company have also been deployed to the region for additional security. Intermittent firing between elements of the Integrated Brigades and the 81st and 83rd Brigade troops was reported during the evening. Initial reports from MONUC indicated

there was some sporadic gunfire around Sake the morning of November 28, but hostilities appeared to have ceased for the time being.

¶15. (SBU) The town of Tongo, about 30 miles north of Goma, is still under partial control of elements of the 83rd Brigade. The 9th IB Commander, General Mayanga, had claimed his soldiers had recaptured the town November 27. MONUC patrols to the area disputed his claim, reporting that the 9th IB held only parts of Tongo. MONUC reports the town of Nyanzale, near Rutshuru, is also held by the 83rd Brigade.

¶16. (C) As reported reftel, a delegation consisting of DSRSG Haile Menkarios and Interior Minister Denis Kalume met with regional officials November 27. FARDC ground forces commander General Gabriel Amisi reportedly told members of the delegation that the renegade troops had plans to capture Goma the evening of November 27. The information was reportedly obtained from the debriefing of a captured soldier of the 83rd Brigade.

¶17. (C) MONUC Force Commander General Babacar Gaye briefed CIAT ambassadors regarding the situation in Sake the afternoon of November 27. Gaye said the Integrated Brigades performed "miserably" against the pro-Nkunda troops. In an unusually frank assessment, he further stated that Kabila must realize that "he has no army." Gaye made it clear the FARDC's lack of logistics, rations and ammunition precluded it from doing much in battle.

¶18. (C) Gaye also noted that there were reported exchanges of fire between elements of the 83rd Brigade, suggesting there was some lack of unity within that group itself.

¶19. (U) The CIAT issued a communique late November 27 condemning the use of force and calling for an immediate cease-fire. The statement urged both sides to return to their previous positions and called for all non-integrated units to

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submit immediately to the demobilization and disarmament process.

¶10. (U) Few additional casualties have been reported since November 26. Three FARDC soldiers from the two integrated brigades and one civilian have been killed in the fighting. A total of 55 FARDC troops and 20 civilians were injured.

¶11. (SBU) Comment: Thanks to quick MONUC intervention the situation in Sake was contained quickly. The poor performance of the FARDC points to the necessity of the new government to make military reform a top priority during the next few months. The continued presence and menace of the non-integrated troops must also be addressed immediately if such reforms are to succeed. End comment.

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